

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PARADOXICAL OUTCOMES ON EMPLOYEES' INTENTIONS TO STAY AND INTENTIONS TO LEAVE

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ABSTRACT: *In general, intention to leave and intention to stay are seen as two ends of a single continuum. This paper challenges this implicit assumption on which the two constructs “intention to leave” (ITL) and “intention to stay” (ITS) has been used interchangeably. It is not necessarily valid to measure intention to stay by asking questions about intention to leave and vice versa. This is among very few studies which found the support for treating intention to leave and intention to stay as separate, rather than bipolar constructs. The purpose of this paper is to distinguish the two constructs of intention to leave and intention to stay conceptually by raising questions like whether the antecedents that decrease employee intention to leave will also increase employees’ intention to stay with same strength? whether intention to leave and intention to stay are similar measures of the same construct? And whether intention to leave and intention to stay can be used interchangeably in empirical studies? The paradoxical outcomes on intention to leave and intention to stay and inconsistency in the operationalization of the two constructs highlighted in the existing literature is the originality of this paper and possible contribution to the body of knowledge.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the employment relationships today has given organizations a way to strengthen the employee to organization bond to reduce the turnover through providing such incentives which are important to their preferences [1]. Few of these incentives may include extrinsic rewards, opportunities to perform challenging work, professional ability development, experience trusting relationships and new experiences with customers/clients. This paper offers new thoughts for research in turnover, particularly the part and effect of key profession driven precursors and representatives' mental get that drive them to leave or stay with their employers.

Few researchers have seen into the driving precursors and effect of willful turnover. They suggested the ways and techniques for organizations to encourage the staying and lessen the leaving behavior of employees [2, 3]. Turnover has been the focus in organizational context over the past few decades because it has a negative impact on firm's financial performance [4–7], decreased the morale of staying staff, knowledge loss, decreased productivity and work quality, increased recruiting expenses and training costs [8,9]. Employee turnover not only shrunk organizational performance, but it has the strongest negative correlation with customer satisfaction [10–13]. Retaining to the good employees is one of the top challenges facing businesses and HR managers today [14]. Voluntary turnover being a global phenomenon still a significant challenge for organizations in achieving their strategic objectives [13] warrants for more research to be done to understand the causes of voluntary turnover.

Past literature focused Intention to leave (ITL) as the single most influential predictor of actual leaving [15]. Few studies have also examined the employee turnover phenomenal by investigating intentions of employees who stay with the organization. Traditionally intention to leave (ITL) has been used interchangeably with a intention to stay (ITS) but the emerging concept of co-existence of high turnover with high retention [16] argue that intention to leave and intention to stay are different constructs which explain turnover differently [17]. This conceptual study aims to differentiate

intention to stay and intention to leave in two-folds. Firstly, by exploring the inter-relationship of both intention to stay (ITS) and intention to leave (ITL) and secondly, by focussing to the motivators of both intention to stay (ITS) and intention to leave (ITL).

This conceptual study limits the investigation of antecedents of intention to stay and intention to leave to organizational incentives through the previous studies arguing on the similarities and differences in the antecedents of intention to stay and intention to leave. It also suggests the research propositions to explain the interrelationships between the constructs of intention to stay and intention to leave.

2. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF INTENTION TO LEAVE (ITL) AND INTENTION TO STAY (ITS)

Intention to leave refers to “the subjective estimation of an individual regarding the probability of leaving an organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982)”. It is considered “a conscious and deliberate desire to leave the organization within the near future as last part of a sequence in the withdrawal cognition process” [17]. Intention to Leave (ITL) is known as the single best predictor of actual turnover [16]. In addition to the Job satisfaction and organizational commitment which are the most influential predictors of Intention to Leave, Matz et al., 2014 explored 65 variables across 13 studies which potentially impact on turnover intentions. Few well reported antecedents include personality and type of job [18–20,21], organizational justice [22], [23,24–27], perceived career growth [19, 24, 25, 27–29,30] job characteristics [31,32, 33], perceived organizational and supervisory support [34–35,16], affective and normative commitment and goal clarity [17,36, 37,38] organizational climate, commitment and support (Filipova 2011)[1]. From the bunch of studies on the factors affecting the leaving intentions of employees, it seems that investigation into this aspect has reached to maturity while ignoring the aspect about the staying intentions of the employees.

Intention to stay refers to “employees’ conscious and deliberate willingness to stay with the organization” [2], [3][4]–[7]. Traditionally Intention to Stay and Intention to Leave were used interchangeably on the concept that the two construct are the two opposite sides of the same coin. Recent

evidence, however, suggests the factors influencing employees' intentions to stay are different from those that affect employees' intentions to leave [8, 9,10–13]. A recent study conducted by Nancarrow and colleagues has demonstrated that Intention to Stay and Intention to Leave represent different constructs and do not measure the one [14,13]. While there is an overlap, they suggested that these constructs should be utilized interchangeably with extreme care, principally when measuring these concepts at workplaces [15,16]. More importantly, [17] found that the antecedents of both constructs are not simply the opposite side of each other. The forces which drive these two constructs are not exactly the same. Hence, examining the similarities and differences between the factors influencing to the stay and leave intentions of employees seems an almost ignored research domain. However, this study focuses in detail the prediction of ITL and ITS through organizational incentives to examine if both ITS and ITL are influenced in similarity or in a different way.

Organizations that reward their workers with remuneration and advancements not just constitute extensive open door costs connected with leaving, additionally offer a passionate impetus to remain in it. In particular, no such empirical study could be traced which report direct relationship of organizational inducements simultaneously on staying and leaving behavior of employees. Most of the relationships are hypothesized on the argument that Intention to leave and Intention to stay are the measures of the same construct. Notwithstanding, the present study taking the support of the empirical studies about ITS and ITL being not exactly the same construct [16,18–20] propose it to be valuable to investigate the simultaneous impact of organizational factors on ITL and ITS. Therefore, organizational factors are proposed to predict ITS and ITL differently below:

Proposition-1: *Organizational Incentives will be negatively related to intentions to leave.*

Proposition 2: *Organizational Incentives will be positively related to intention to stay.*

Proposition 3: *The magnitude of the negative relationship of Organizational Incentives with intention to leave will be different from the magnitude of the positive relationship of Organizational Incentives with intention to stay.*

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

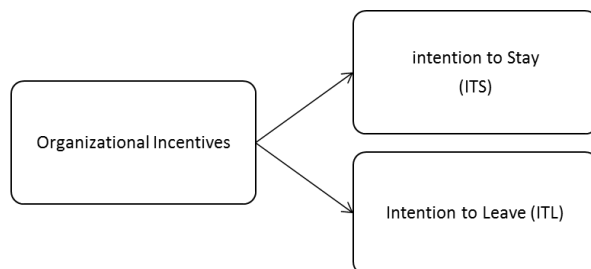


Figure 1: Conceptual research framework

4. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study presented and conceptually examined the differential impact of organizational incentives on intention to stay and intention to leave. The conceptual research model presented in the study postulates that organizational incentives predict to both employees' intention to stay and intention to leave. Finally, the differential impact of organizational incentives is conceptualized on employees' staying and leaving intentions. This suggests that organizational incentives have different Pull and Push impact on the employee. It will be of great value to know if Pull impact of an incentive exceeds Push impact then it will be a stayer factor otherwise it will be a leaver factor.

The possible findings are anticipated to produce meaningful improvement in managing and understanding the paradoxical nature of intention to stay and intention to leave constructs in practice as well as in theory. The main managerial and administrative implication from this study will be that it will challenge the employees' retention strategies which are only based on the factors predicting employees' intention to leave rather than also taking in consideration to the staying intentions of the employees. By investigating the Push and Pull impact of the organizational incentives, employer, especially the HR managers, can effectively manage the retention and turnover of the employees.

The implications for further research would be to test the model empirically for different organizational incentives. Furthermore, by testing the proposed model for job-related factors such as job characteristics and individual factors such as demographics, previous experiences, and family to work support might describe the similarities and the differences between the factors affecting employees' intentions to leave and their intentions to stay in the organization.

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